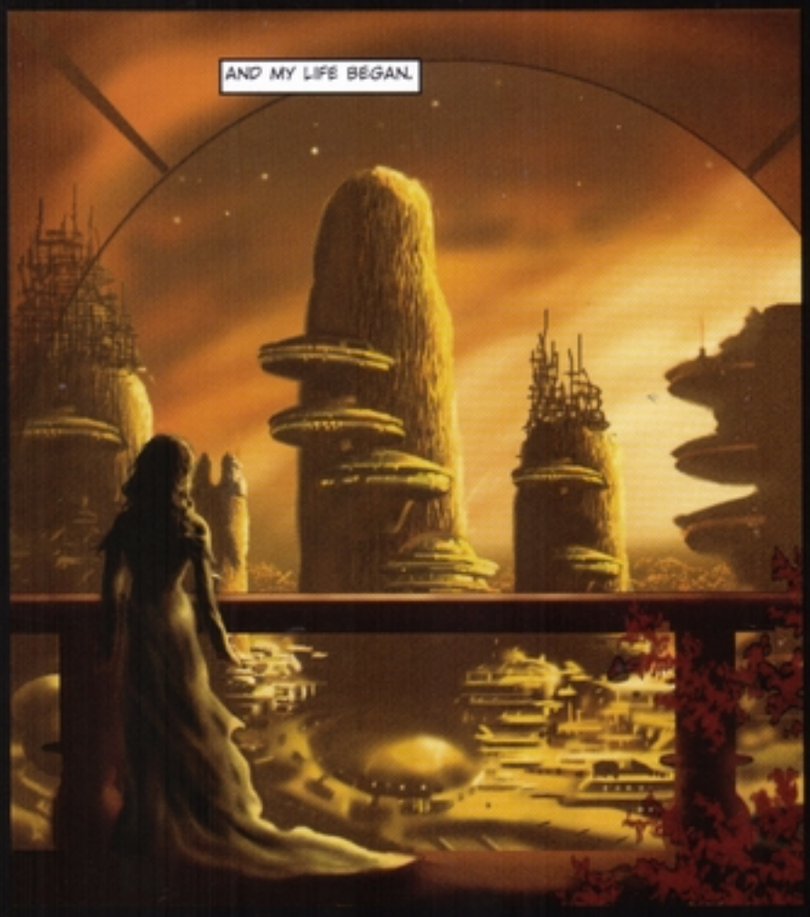
FROM THE JOURNALS OF LADY DEIRDRE SKYE:
THE DREAM WAS A SIMPLE ONE. THE STARSHIP UNITY WOULD LEAVE A RAVAGED EARTH AND MAKE A NEW HOME FOR ITS PEOPLE ON A NEW PLANET.
UP THERE AMONG THE STARS, I BELIEVED WE COULD AVOID THE GREED AND VIOLENCE THAT COMBINED TO DESTROY OUR NATIVE LANDS. AS A XENOBIOLOGIST, I KNEW WE *HAD* TO.
AND THEN I WOKE UP.
VIOLENCE ERUPTED BETWEEN FACTIONS. OUR CAPTAIN, JOHN GARLAND, WAS FATALLY WOUNDED.
THE SHIP THREATENED TO BREAK APART--FIGURATIVELY AND LITERALLY.
AND SO, I TOOK MY GREENHOUSE, MY PEOPLE--AND MY CHANCES, IN ONE OF THE SHIP'S SEVEN LANDING PODS.
WHEN THE UNITY EXPLODED, A DREAM ENDED...


AND MY LIFE BEGAN.

FOR ME, THIS IS THE BEST TIME OF THE DAY-THAT POINT WHEN NIGHT AND DAY MEET, JUST FOR A MOMENT.
A CHANCE TO REFLECT UPON OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS...

AND OUR FAILURES.
OUR NEIGHBORS, THE MORGANITES, INSIST THAT PLANET IS MERELY A STRUMPET, BORN TO BE TAKEN.

THEY DO NOT RESPECT OUR BELIEF THAT WE MUST LIVE *WITH* THE PLANET, NOT SIMPLY *ON* IT. THEY DON'T HEAR THE CRIES. THEY DON'T FEEL HER AGONY.
AND IF WE CANNOT MAKE THEM HEAR THAT--

THEN HOW WELL ARE WE REALLY SERVING PLANET?
WAIT A MOMENT--

THAT'S NO STAR!

"IT'S MORGAN NEEDLEJETS!"
DEFENSE FORCES--FAN OUT!!
WHAT ARE WE *DOING*? THESE THINGS DON'T EVEN KNOW WE'RE HERE!!
"HAND WEAPONS? AGAINST A NEEDLEJET?! THIS IS *INSANE!*"
"WHY DON'T THEY JUST GIVE US *SWORDS* AND CYANIDE PILLS!"
THE NEEDLEJETS ARE AN APPROPRIATE WEAPON FOR THE MORGANITES.
THEY'RE QUICK, DEADLY, AND THEY WASTE FUEL.
I HAVE HEARD PLANET SPEAK TO ME IN THE PAST...

BUT TODAY, PLANET WASN'T THE ONLY ONE SCREAMING.
...IN ADDITION TO THE CASUALTIES, THEY DID CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO THE FRONTIER GREENHOUSE, AND BURNED AWAY LARGE PATCHES OF XENOFUNGUS OUTSIDE OF THE SETTLEMENT.
MAKING US MORE VULNERABLE TO GROUND ATTACKS.
YES. FORGIVE MY BLUNTNESS, L DEIRDRE, BUT THIS NOT A BATTLE. T WAS SUICIDE.
HAND WEAPONS AND FIVE YEAR-OLD SHREDDER PISTOLS ARE NOT A LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST A NEEDLEJET
IF WE FAIL TO OBTAIN SOME MORE ADVANCED WEAPONRY, WE WILL FALL LIKE ROTTING TREES--FIT FOR NOTHING BUT POSTHUMOUS RECYCLING.
EVEN SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A LASER WOULD BENEFIT--
OFFICER MAKEBA, LET THERE BE NO MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THIS. I DO NOT FAVOR THE SLAUGHTER OF OUR PEOPLE ANY MORE THAN YOU DO.
BUT WE BOTH KNOW WHAT HAPPENS TO A PLANET WHEN ITS RESOURCES ARE EXPLOITED IN THE NAME OF "DEFENSE." THE POPULATION SUFFERS. THE PLANET SUFFERS.
WE DID NOT COME HERE TO POISON THESE RIVERS AND RUIN THESE LANDS. WE ARE HERE TO BE AT ONE WITH PLANET, OFFICER MAKEBA.
THE SECRET-THE KEY TO OUR GOAL-IS TO DEFEND OURSELVES AS PLANET DOES.

I HOPE WE WILL FIND THAT "SECRET" SOON, LADY DEIRDRE.
AS YOU WISH, OFFICER MAKEBA.
IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME, I WOULD LIKE A MOMENT ALONE WITH MY SOLDIERS.
I KNOW THE SACRIFICE YOU MADE. I KNOW YOU WOULD DO IT AGAIN.
BUT I WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR SACRIFICE TO BE IN VAIN.
I WILL CONTINUE TO STRESS TO LADY DEIRDRE THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE--
EH? WHO IS THAT?
SLLLSSSSSSL
THIS IS GAIAN OFFICER MAKEBA. IDENTIFY YOUR...
SSSLLLLSSSSSLSLSLSLSLLSSSSSS
...SELF.
BEEP
THIS IS OFFICER MAKEBA. A MINDWORM BOIL IS HEADING FOR THE MAIN BASE. ALERT ALL--
-CCCH
THUNK

WHILE INSIDE THE MAIN GARDEN OF GAIA'S LANDING, A SIREN BLARES...
WEE!OOO
SLAM
WHAT'S GOING ON?
LINDLY, THAT'S THE ALARM! WE'VE GOT TO EVACUATE!
UH...HELLO? PLANET TO LINDLY!
MEAGAN? DON'T YOU HEAR IT?
YES, THE ALARM! I TOLD YOU! COME ON!
NO--THE SONG...PLANET'S SONG...
WHAT?! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING A--
IT'S UP THERE...
ATTENTION, ALL PERSONNEL! THIS IS LADY DEIRDRE
OH...
LINDLY, I THINK WE SHOULD GO NOW.
PROCEED AT ONCE TO THE NEAREST SHIELD ROOM! THIS IS NOT A DRILL--

THIS IS A MINDWORM ATTACK!
SINCE OUR ARRIVAL ON PLANET, WE HAVE TUTORED OUR PEOPLE--ESPECIALLY OUR FIGHTERS--IN WHAT WE CALL "MORALE TRAINING."
IT'S INTENDED TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL DEFENSE AGAINST THE INSIDIOUS ATTACKS OF THE MINDWORMS.
UHNN...
GUINAN?
BUT AS PROTECTION GOES, IT IS NOT COMPLETE...
CAN'T-- FOCUS...
BURNING UP-- IN HERE...
DECLAN... YOU'RE DYING...
SLS
SLLZMSLZM
AAAAH!
WE'RE ALL DYING...

GOT TO-- GET--THIS-- OFF...
CAN'T STAY--IN THIS SKIN...

THE MINDWORMS FEED ON NEURAL ENERGY. ONCE THEY'VE GOTTEN INSIDE A MAN'S HEAD FIGURATIVELY--
SHPAF!
=HURK=

THEY DO IT LITERALLY.
SLZMSLS

SLZSZMSLSSSLZM

LADY DEIRDRE, YOU HAVE A VIDEO CALL FROM CEO MORGAN--
MORGAN CAN WAIT! GREGOR, WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE FIGHTERS?
CASUALTIES NUMBER AS EXPECTED, LADY DEIRDRE, BUT THE FIRST TWO UNITS APPEAR TO HAVE MOMENTARILY REPELLED THE FRONTAL INVASION.
GODDARD, PREPARE A THIRD UNIT FOR FIELD COMBAT. LUCINDA, ARE ALL OUR NONCOMS SAFELY INSIDE THE SHIELD ROOMS?
SOME ARE STILL EN ROUTE, LADY DEIRDRE. ALL PERSONNEL *ARE* SEALED INSIDE THE BASE...
"AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THEY'RE *SAFE*..."

LINDLY!! GET YOUR MASK ON! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!!
NO...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "NO"? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?!
IF THE NITROGEN IN THE AIR DOESN'T KILL YOU, THE MIND-WORMS WILL!
DON'T YOU SEE? THEY'RE NOT ATTACKING...
THEY'RE DEFENDING...
FFWWOOOOOOM
LINDLY! GET OUT OF HERE NOW!
LADY DEIRDRE!
BUT YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND!! I--
LINDLY, I DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR GAMES!
I WANT YOU TO FOLLOW EVACUA-TION PROCED--
PROSHE--
POOR LAD
DEIRDRE...

LOOKS LIKE YOU WEREN'T "ONE WITH PLANET" AFTER ALL...
MORGAN?
W-WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY PEOPLE?
OH, THEM?
I'VE DONE NOTHING, DEAR LADY--
THAT YOU HAVEN'T DONE ALREADY.
MAKEBA?
NO, LADY DEIRDRE. NOT MAKEBA--
-NOT ANY MORE...
UGH!
NOISE-- BEHIND ME...
FWOOM
WELL DONE, LADY DEIRDRE...
YOU MADE US ONE WITH PLANET!
NO!!
LADY DEIRDRE...

ARE--ARE YOU DEATH?
I AM HOPE, LADY DEIRDRE.
TAKE MY HAND...
LINDLY?
LADY DEIRDRE?
BY GAIA... HOW...?
WELL?...
PLEASE SEE TO IT THAT THESE WORMS... UH...
LEAVE...

IT WAS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A DREAM, LADY DEIRDRE...
I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE BEEN AFRAID, ONLY--
"AND THEN WE NEED TO TALK--ALONE..."
ONLY?...
ONLY-- WE WERE COMMUNI-CATING..
"THEN EVERYTHING AROUND ME CHANGED. I WAS SURROUNDED BY THEM, BUT THEY DID ME NO HARM. JUST THE OPPOSITE."
"I WAS SEEING WHAT THEY SAW. FEELING WHAT THEY FELT. WE WERE--"
WE?
WHAT? OH. I MEAN--
IT WAS AS THOUGH WE WERE WOVEN INTO THE SAME FABRIC. ONE WITH THE WORLD. IT WAS... EXHILARATING.
AND WHEN I REALIZED THEY WERE ATTACKING YOU... STOPPING THEM SEEMED SO SIMPLE.
THIS IS REMARKABLE. FROM THE SOUND OF IT, YOU WERE ABLE TO TAP INTO THE MINDWORMS' NEURAL NET.
LINDLY, SINCE WE ARRIVED ON PLANET FIVE YEARS AGO, WE'VE STRIVEN TO BE ONE WITH THIS WORLD--LIVE AS IT WOULD LIVE--DEFEND IT AS IT WOULD DEFEND ITSELF.
AS A RESULT, WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN VULNERABLE TO THE MIND-WORMS ON ONE HAND AND BLOODSUCKING PROFI-TEERS LIKE MORGAN ON THE OTHER.
NOW, WE MAY BE ABLE TO SOLVE BOTH PROBLEMS AT ONCE.

HALT!
"WE HAVE A NEW BASE ON THE EDGE OF GAIAN TERRITORY--THE ISLE OF WINDS. I'D LIKE YOU TO GO OVER THERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR ADDITIONAL TESTING."
"I'LL TELL YOU THIS NOW: THE BASE IS SURROUNDED BY XENOFUNGUS. THE ISLE OF WINDS IS EVEN MORE VULNERABLE TO MINDWORMS THAN WE ARE AT GAIA'S LANDING."
"I'M AFRAID I CAN GUARANTEE THAT NOT EVERYONE WORKING THERE WILL APPRECIATE YOUR PARTICULAR--TALENT."
...H, SO YOU'RE THE WORM WITCH.
PASS.
ALREADY I FEEL THEIR HATE--THEIR SUSPICION--
IS IT THE WORMS THEY FEAR--

OR IS IT ME?
YOU MUST BE LINDLY.
I'M ERIK. LET ME TAKE THAT FOR YOU.
OH... THANK YOU.
I WONDERED IF ANYBODY WANTED TO BE NEAR THE MINDWORMS-- OR ME.
THE MINDWORMS DON'T HAVE A REAL GOOD REP AROUND HERE...BUT, HEY, WE'VE GOT YOU TO PROTECT US, RIGHT?
UH...RIGHT.
I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR QUARTERS...
"AND THEN TO DOCTOR SCOTT."
AH... WELCOME, MY DEAR...
MY, UMM, COLLEAGUES AND I ARE VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOUR, UMMH, TALENT.
WE HAVE A SAMPLE, IF YOU WILL, RIGHT, UHHM, OVER HERE.
THE SOUND IS FAINT AT FIRST--
NOW, WE'D LIKE TO RECORD YOUR REACTIONS AS YOU, UH, TRY TO COMMUNICATE WITH--
THEN IT BECOMES RECOGNIZABLE AS A WAIL. A CRY OF HELP..
IT'S HURT.
I BEG YOUR--
IT'S HURT.
IT'S DYING.

IT'S IN SUCH PAIN. I'VE NEVER HEARD SUCH SUFFERING.
I'VE NEVER *FELT* SUCH SUFFERING.
LINDLY? DO YOU NEED HELP?
DOES SHE ACT LIKE THIS WHEN THESE THINGS ARE KILLING US?
I'M SORR
ALL RIGHT. I THINK THAT'S...UH, *ENOUGH* FOR TODAY. FOR NOW, LET'S, UH, ALL CONCENTRATE ON GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP...
SLEEP DOESN'T COME EASILY. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT WOULDN'T.
I WOULD PRAY IF I KNEW WHAT TO PRAY FO--
MMUMPH!
JUST SHUT THE DOOR AND GET OVER HERE!
SELL US OUT TO THE WORMS, WILL YOU WITCH?
SHE'S PUTTING UP A STRUGG*YOW!*

GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE-- OUT TO...ANYWHERE
NOT SO FAST, MISS LINDLY!
ARGH! THAT BITCH!
MAYBE WE'LL CUT YOU UP AND FEED YOU TO YOUR PRECIOUS...
WORMMMPH!
THERE SHE GOES!
GET YOUR NITRO MASK!
I DON'T REMEMBER COMING OUT HERE--YET SOMEHOW, IT MAKES SENSE...SOMEHOW, IT FEELS SAFE.
SSSSSSSSSLLLLLLLLLLIIIIIIII
A RUSTLING SOUND-- TURNS INTO MY NAME...
OH...

MY...

HELLO...

MY THOUGHTS COME SO EASILY..IT'S LIKE NOT THINKING AT ALL.

IT'S OVER...
YOU'RE OURS NOW, WITCH.
THE VOICE IS THREATENING--
THE RESPONSE IS AN INSTINCTIVE THOUGHT..

AND PLANET COMES TO LIFE.
SSTSTSSTSSSTSTSTSTSS
AAAAH!
HOLY SHI...
THEY ARE ARMED TO KILL HUMANS--NOT MINDWORMS.
AAAAH!
EVEN WITH THEIR MORALE TRAINING--THEY FOLD LIKE BURNING PAPER.
AAAAH!
I SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING--I HEAR THEIR CRIES--BUT I FEEL SO REMOVED FROM IT.
THIS IS HOW PLANET PROTECTS ITS OWN.
WHA--?
THERE IS A MOMENT OF UNCERTAINTY--THE LINK BREAKS
THE WORMS DISPERSE, AS SUDDENLY AS THEY HAD ARRIVED.

LINDLY?
LINDLY! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WE HEARD A STRUGGLE COMING FROM YOUR ROOM--
EH...ERIK...
ERIK...!...
SHH...IT'S ALL RIGHT...LET'S GET YOU BACK INSIDE...
"UNBELIEVABLE!"
OUR NEEDLEJETS WERE SUCCESSFUL IN DESTROYING GAIAN SETTLEMENTS AND GREENHOUSES. IN THEORY, WE HAVE THEM RIGHT WHERE WE WANT THEM...
YET FOR TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, LADY DEIRDRE HAS REFUSED TO RESPOND TO OUR CALLS. ONE WOULD THINK SHE HAD DEVASTATED US.
BEEP
DEIRDRE SKYE... YOU ARE BOTH COMPLEX AND BEAUTIFUL. AND IF OUR GOALS DIFFER, OUR DEVOTION TO THEM DOES NOT.
BUT YOU HAVE RESOURCES I WANT--AND YOU HAVE YET TO LEARN THE LENGTHS TO WHICH A DETERMINED BUSINESSMAN WILL GO.
YOUR CALL TO COLONEL SANTIAGO IS READY, SIR.

CEO MORGAN. GREETINGS FROM THE SPARTAN FEDERATION.
AH, COLONEL SANTIAGO. YOU LOOK WELL. THE LIFE OF A WARRIOR AGREES WITH YOU.
MY TIME IS SHORT, CEO MORGAN. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
THE SAME THING I ALWAYS WANT, COLONEL-- *BUSINESS.*
TO BE SPECIFIC: *YOU* HAVE WEAPONS. I HAVE ENERGY SOURCES.
"I HAVE A PROPOSITION FOR YOU..."
WE'VE...MADE STRIDES IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE MINDWORMS, LADY DEIRDRE.
I SEE.
AND...THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO TELL ME?
THAT'S--ALL FOR NOW, LADY DEIRDRE.
I...SEE.

I'D LIKE DOCTOR SCOTT TO CONNECT YOU TO THE BIOMONITORS--AND KEEP YOU CONNECTED--TO MONITOR ANY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EFFECTS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE...
LINDLY--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M--FINE, LADY DEIRDRE... WE'RE FINE...
"EVERYTHING'S FINE."
EXCELLENT. THE BIOMONITORS SEEM TO BE, UHN, FUNCTIONING--AND ACCORDING TO THE BIOMONITORS, YOU, UH, SEEM TO BE FUNCTIONING AS WELL.
LUCKY ME.
I MUST SAY I'M, UHHM, IMPRESSED. IT APPEARS YOU HAVE A REAL, UH, BOND WITH THE WORMS.
IM SURE THIS MUST, UHH, BE A STRAIN, BUT LADY DEIRDRE HAS MADE THE DECISION...
TO MONITOR YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STATES AT ALL TIMES...
LINDLY?!
UHH... DOCHHTUH...
MY SPEECH SLURS...MY VISION SLURS...
SOMETHING'S WRONG...
THE HARMONY HAS TURNED TO A SHRIEK...
I WANT TO SHRIEK IN RESPONSE--BUT I AM OVERWHELMED BY A TORRENT OF WHISPERS.
EACH ONE SOUNDS LIKE METAL ON RUSTY METAL. EACH ONE SAYS THE SAME THING--
THEY'RE HUNGRY.

LINDLY? DOCTOR, SHE'S AWAKE!
NNHN--
WELL, LADY DEIRDRE SHOULD, UHHM, KNOW ABOUT THIS. ERIK, PLEASE STAY HERE. I'LL RETURN MOMENTARILY.
ERIK, I--
IT'S ALL RIGHT...YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.
NO, NO, IT'S NOT. THE WORMS-- THEY DON'T WANT THEM HERE.
WHAT? WHO--THE MORGANS?
NO. I WE DON'T WANT THEM HERE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WHO'S WE?
I--DON'T KNOW...
ERIK, I'M... AFRAID. I DON'T KNOW WHO'S IN CONTROL AT THIS POINT.
THE WORMS DON'T WANT TO LET GO.
I NEED A HUMAN TOUCH...

FROM THE JOURNALS OF LADY DEIRDRE SKYE...
BEEP
LADY DEIRDRE. I AM DELIGHTED THAT YOU DEIGN TO ACCEPT MY CALL. AS USUAL, YOU LOOK RAVISHING.
OUR CAUSE HAS MADE REMARKABLE PROGRESS-- DOCTOR SCOTT TELLS ME THAT LINDLY'S ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE MINDWORMS IS AMAZING--
YET THE URGENCY OF OUR SEARCH MEANS WE HAVE HAD PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TOGETHER TO PROCESS THESE DEVELOPMENTS--AND I KNOW YOU CANNOT SIMPLY BOMBARD A PLANT WITH SUN AND EXPECT IT TO GROW...
ONCE AGAIN, YOUR TONGUE IS MORE ENDEARING THAN YOUR ACTIONS.
CLEANING UP AFTER YOUR NEEDLEJETS HAS KEPT ME OCCUPIED.
YES, I'M TRULY SORRY IT HAD TO COME TO THAT--OF COURSE, SUCH...DEVELOPMENTS CAN BE EASILY AVOIDED IN THE FUTURE, DEIRDRE...
LADY DEIRDRE, SHALL WE STOP PLAYING GAMES?
YOU HAVE SEEN WHAT WE CAN DO. I HAVE THE RESOURCES AND CONNECTIONS TO OBTAIN EVEN MORE. YOUR SLAVISH "LOVE" FOR PLANET LIMITS YOUR ABILITY TO DEVELOP ANY IN KIND.
YOU KNOW THE RULES OF SETTLEMENT. YOU AGREED TO THEM. THIS LAND--AND ITS RESOURCES--BELONG TO THE GAIANS.
PERHAPS YOU COULD TAKE UP THE MATTER WITH THE PLANETARY COUNCIL--
OF COURSE, SINCE YOU DON'T WANT TO DEVELOP, YOU COULD ALWAYS CONTRACT US TO DO IT.
MMMM. AN INTERESTING-- CONCEPT, CEO MORGAN...
IF ONLY I WASN'T PLAGUED BY THAT "SLAVISH LOVE OF PLANET."

I BELIEVE THIS IS A MATTER FOR THE PLANETARY COUNCIL. I MIGHT SUGGEST YOU CONTACT COMMISSIONER LAL BEFORE OUR NEXT MEETING.
I HAVE OTHER CALLS TO MAKE. SKYE OUT.
PUCKISH.
SOMEDAY, SHE WILL REMEMBER THAT I OFFERED THE CHANCE TO DO THIS QUIETLY...
"NOW WE HAVE NO OPTION BUT TO DO IT LOUDLY."
LINDLY? ARE YOU THERE?
UH...LADY DEIRDRE! GREETINGS!
WHY ARE YOU WHISPERING?
OH... WELL...
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT? I HEAR TWO OF THE GUARDS HAVE DISAPPEARED AND DR. SCOTT TELLS ME YOUR BIOSCANS HAVE BEEN UNUSUALLY HIGH. WHAT'S GOING ON OVER...
...THERE...?
YAAWN

LIH-HUH.
WELL, WE ALL REACT TO CRISES DIFFERENTLY.
BUT THAT ISN'T WHY I CALLED....

LINDLY--ERIK--
I AM CONTACTING YOU BECAUSE WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT OFFICER MORGAN HAS BOLSTERED HIS ARSENAL....WITH THE HELP OF THE SPARTAN FEDERATION.
MORGAN AND HIS PEOPLE HAVE LONG COVETED OUR LAND. I SUSPECT THEY WOULD DO VIRTUALLY ANYTHING TO ACQUIRE IT.

INCLUDING ATTACKING THE ISLE OF WINDS.

THIS IS WHAT WE'VE BEEN PREPARING FOR. WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU TO LEAD THE MIND-WORMS INTO BATTLE, BOTH THERE AND HERE.

YOU'LL BE ACCOMPANIED BY A UNIT OF GAIAN SOLDIERS. YOU MUST *ALLOW* THEM TO PROTECT YOU. WE MUST NOT LET ON.

MORGAN'S SOLDIERS ARE WELL-ARMED. IF THEY SENSE YOUR CONNECTION TO PLANET--WHAT YOU CAN DO--

IT WON'T BE THE WORMS THEY'LL GO AFTER. IT'LL BE *YOU.*
LADY DEIRDRE--MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORMS SEEMS TO HAVE... *CHANGED.*

"THEY WELCOME ME INTO THE NEURAL NET--SOMETIMES THEY BRING ME IN--BUT I'M AFRAID THEY WON'T ALLOW ME TO LEAVE."
AND WHEN I'M THERE--IN THEIR WORLD--
I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO LEAVE.
LINDLY, DOCTOR SCOTT AND HIS STAFF ARE UNDER ORDER TO TRACK YOU VIA THE BIOMONITORS. THEY'LL TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO INSURE YOU DON'T TRAVEL TOO FAR INTO THE WORMS' NEURAL NET.
WE NEED YOUR TALENT TOO MUCH FOR THAT, LINDLY. PLANET NEEDS YOUR--
REALLY?!? SENDING THE NATIVE LIFE FORMS TO DIE IN OUR PLACE? THIS IS WHAT PLANET NEEDS?!
LINDLY?!
LADY DEIRDRE, EVER SINCE WE ARRIVED ON PLANET, YOU'VE TOLD US THAT WE MUST LIVE IN HARMONY WITH OUR NEW HOME--THAT PEOPLE LIKE THE MORGANITES EXPLOIT IT FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT.
HOW IS THAT DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME TO DO?
LINDLY, I KNOW THIS HAS BEEN A DIFFICULT PERIOD--
"DON'T PATRONIZE ME, LADY DEIRDRE! YOU HAVEN'T SEEN WHAT I'VE SEEN!"
"THESE MINDWORMS ARE LIVING, FEELING CREATURES. WE'RE JUST REPLACING ONE FOOT SOLDIER WITH ANOTHER!"
DO WE FIGHT THE MORGANITES TO LIVE AT PEACE WITH PLANET--
OR TO REMAKE THIS WORLD--IN OUR IMAGE INSTEAD OF THEIRS?!?

LINDLY, THIS IS NOT A WAR I WANTED TO FIGHT--AGAINST THE MORGANITES *OR* THE MIND-WORMS...
BUT WE ARE IN IT NOW--AND IT HAS GIVEN US THE CHANCE WE'VE DREAMED OF--A CHANCE TO WORK *WITH* PLANET TO STOP THE PLUNDERING OF NWABUDIKE MORGAN.

IF WE DO NOT SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY, WE CAN GUARANTEE TWO THINGS: MORGAN AND HIS PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE TO WEAKEN PLANET WITH THEIR ATTACKS...
AND *WE* WILL BE WIPED OUT. *PERIOD.*

WITH THAT IN MIND, I HOPE YOU WILL KEEP SUCH OUTBURSTS TO YOURSELF IN THE FUTURE.

SKYE OL
FROM THIS MOMENT ON, ALL PERSONNEL ARE ON ALERT.

DAMN IT.

ALL OUR PLANNING--ALL OUR SOLIDARITY--AND IT ALL COMES DOWN TO A SINGLE ONE OF US.
WHEN WE NEED YOU LINDLY--WHEN PLANE NEEDS YOU--

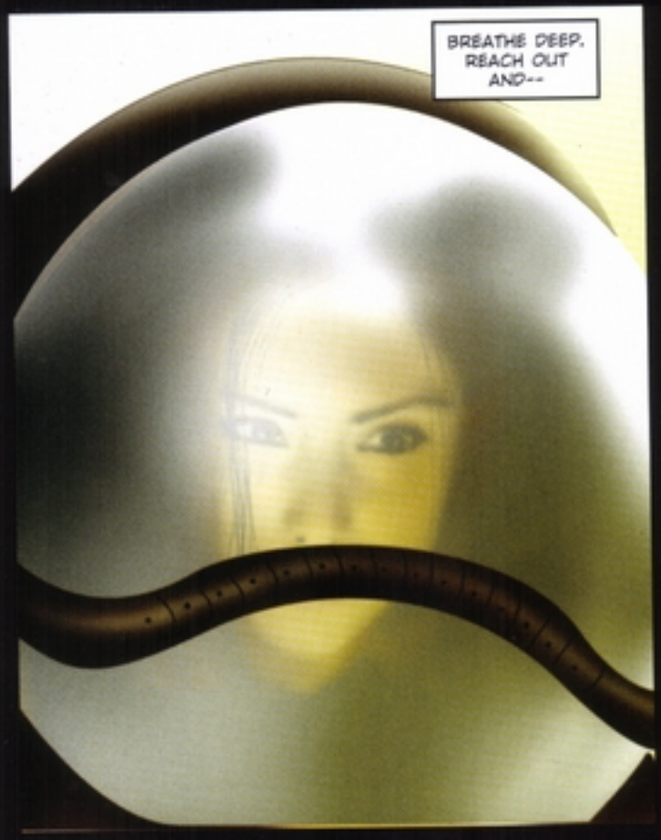
WHERE WILL YOUR ALLEGIANCE LIE?
ATTENTION, ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL--STAND BY FOR A MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.*
TODAY, YOU ARE GOING TO LEAD US ALL INTO A NEW FRONTIER--A NEW WORLD OF PROSPERITY.
LADY DEIRDRE AND HER ZEALOTS HAVE TURNED A DEAF EAR TO OUR NEEDS--THEY WOULD HAVE US BE SLAVES TO THE EARTH--DO NOTHING WITHOUT OUR PLANET'S PERMISSION.
"WE HAVE WAITED FOR HER AND HER PEOPLE TO SEE THE SENSE OF OUR ARGUMENTS. TODAY...
...THE WAITING IS OVER."
ALL OF MY LIFE, I'VE BEEN TAUGHT THAT TO SERVE PLANET IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL...
BUT NOW I JUST WANT TO DISAPPEAR. I WOULD DO ANYTHING RIGHT NOW TO KEEP YOU FROM GOING OUT THERE.
"BUT THE MARK OF A GOOD BUSINESSMAN, LIKE A GOOD RULER, IS IN ACCEPTING AND MASTERING NEW FRONTIERS."
"ALL OF YOU KNOW THAT MANKIND'S GREAT POWER LIES IN TAMING THE UNKNOWN, AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND."
"AS I SPEAK TO YOU, THERMAL DRILLS BEARING OUR MARK ARE PREPARING TO TAP INTO THE VAST UNTAPPED RESOURCES OF THE GAIAN SETTLEMENT."
I DON'T THINK THE CHOICE IS OURS ANY LONGER...

UNITS ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE FIELD, AS PER YOUR INSTRUCTIONS.
NEEDLEJETS IN THE AIR AND SINGULARITY TANKS ON THE GROUND...
THANK YOU, GODDARD. LUCINDA, GREGOR--WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR?
IT APPEARS THAT THE MORGANITES ARE LAUNCHING A DUAL ATTACK, LADY DEIRDRE.
"...WITH ADDITIONAL SOLDIERS TO CLEAR A PATH FOR THE THERMAL BOREHOLES."
GODDARD, "OPERATION MINDSTORM" IS IN PLACE--YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
LUCINDA, CONTACT DR. SCOTT AT THE ISLE OF WINDS.
ALL THAT SCIENCE--ALL THAT EFFORT--ALL FOR THE PURPOSE OF DESTROYING US.
"CONTACT ESTABLISHED, LADY DEIRDRE."
DOCTOR SCOTT! ARE YOU AND YOUR STAFF SECURE?
IT, UHHH, APPEARS SO, LADY DEIRDRE. WE UNDERSTAND THE GIRL IS ABOUT TO ENTER THE FIELD ON THE HEELS OF THE THIRD UNIT.
YOU AND YOUR STAFF MUST KEEP AN EYE ON HER BIOMONITOR AT ALL TIMES. IF IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S GETTING IN TOO DEEP, BRING HER BACK. DO WHATEVER IT TAKES.
"WE DON'T DARE LOSE HER. NOT NOW."

UNDERNEATH THE HELMET, SIMPLE SOUNDS--LIKE YOUR BREATH--SOUND LIKE THUNDER.
WHILE THE HUMAN VOICE SOUNDS TINY AND SHRILL. LIKE AN INSECT.
LINDLY--THIS IS, UHHH...

DOCTOR SCOTT? WHERE'S LADY--?
LADY DEIRDRE IS, UHHH, *UNAVAILABLE* AT PRESENT. HOWEVER, BOTH SHE AND I WILL BE ON THIS CHANNEL WHILE YOU, UHHH, *WORK*.

WE, AT THE ISLE OF WINDS, ARE PREPARED TO BRING YOU BACK TO, UHH, *REALITY*, SHOULD THE NEED ARISE. HEH.


BREATHE DEEP. REACH OUT AND--

NOTHING.
ONLY THE SOUND OF BREATHING.
FINALLY, A R

AND THE GROUND ERUPTS.
SIR, WE'RE APPROACHING THE ISLE OF WINDS AND THE GAIANS DON'T APPEAR TO HAVE ANY SORT OF AIR DEFENSE, NOW OR FORTHCOMING.
EXCELLENT. PREPARE TO DIVE.
YES, SIR. PREPARING TO--
--ATTACK?
PILOT HAWKE?
HAWKE, WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE?

OHGODOHGODOH GOD! I'M BURNING UP!...
BURNING? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HAWKE, LISTEN TO ME!! OUR INSTRUMENTS SHOW NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR JET! GET BACK BEHIND THOSE CONTROLS NOW!!
YOU'RE GOING INTO A DIVE! IF YOU DON'T PULL OUT, YOU'RE GOING TO...
EEAK
CRASSH

I TRY TO REMEMBER WHO I AM-- WHAT MY PURPOSE IS--
BUT PART OF ME IS IN FREE-FALL.

AND PART OF ME DOESN'T CARE WHERE I LAND.
LINDLY!
NNNNNNNNAAAA-
AAAAAAHHH

THE WORM LADY IS STILL ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE NEURAL NET--
REMARKABLE. IT'S AS THOUGH SHE CAN'T FIND HER WAY OUT.
WELL, WE'VE GOT OUR ORDERS...

"BEGIN ADMINISTERING SHOCKS. CONTINUE TO DO SO UNTIL THE NEURAL ACTIVITY REACHES ACCEPTABLE LEVELS."
LINDLY!! PLEASE!!

ER-- ERIK?!
THE WORMS-- WON'T STOP WITH MORGAN--.

WE'RE ALL INVADAAAHHNNHH!!

RRRIIIPPP
OH, BOY....
UH, DOCTOR SCOTT...?
YOU MIGHT WANT TO SEE THIS.
LINDLY? WHAT ARE YOU--
THE SHOCKS-- AREN'T ENOUGH. I NEED AN... ANCHOR.
PLEASE... HELP ME UP--
AND HOLD ME. PLEASE HOLD ME. DON'T LET GO.
LINDLY, I--I--

YOU'RE TELLING ME SHE'S CUT OFF ALL COMMUNI-CATION?
EVIDENTLY SO, UHHMM, LADY DEIRDRE. APPARENTLY, YOUNG ERIK WAS ADMINISTERING TO HER, UHH, NEEDS, BUT NOW HE'S CEASED RESPONDING TO OUR CALLS.
"WE FEAR HE MAY, UHHH, HAVE TRIED TO JOIN THE GIRL IN THE NEURAL NET."
"THEY ARE LITERALLY ON THEIR OWN."
AT THIS MOMENT, THE MINDWORMS SEE ME AS AN ALLY--A DEFENDER...AS ONE OF THEM.
BUT WHILE WE ARE IN SYNCHRO-NIZATION...
WE ARE NOT OMNIPOTENT...
AAAHHH!
AND WE ARE NOT INVULNERABLE.
OH, NO, PLEASE, NO...ERIK?!
BUT WHEN THREATENED, WE ARE SWIFT AND UNSTOP-PABLE...'

WHA--?
NO!
ERIK!!
THE WORMS COVER ME, OVERWHELM ME--NOT TO KILL, BUT TO PROTECT...
AND THEY DO DISCRIMINATE.
"I KNOW WE'VE ENCOUNTERED THE MINDWORMS BEFORE, SIR..."
BUT WE'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED SUCH A...CONCENTRATED ATTACK. YOU'LL THINK IT STRANGE, SIR, BUT IT'S AS THOUGH THEY ACTUALLY HAD SOME KIND OF STRATEGY.
Casualties
Material Los
Related
al Information:
ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS, WE LOST RECORD NUMBERS FOR WHAT AMOUNTS TO--COSMETIC DAMAGE.
MR. NIXON, IT DOES APPEAR OUR RESOURCES COULD BE PUT TO BETTER USE.
TELL ALL REMAINING UNITS TO RETURN TO BASE.
"WE SHALL HAVE MORE FIGHTS FOR THEM."
ERIK

I'M HERE NOW. IT'S ALL RIGHT. IT'S OVER. THE MORGAN FORCES HAVE RETREATED.
LI--LINDLY?
I FELT YOU-- SLIP AWAY...

WAY TO GO. YOU...SAVED US.

NO. YOU SAVED ME.
THERE'S SOMEONE OVER HERE!

OH, GOD.
GET A STRETCHER!

IT'S IMPOR-TANT I BE WITH HIM--
IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT FROM HERE.
BUT--YOU DON'T--
HE'S SUFFERED MASSIVE CHEST WOUNDS. PRIORITY "A."

BACK OFF, WITCH!
WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED OUT HERE. HE WAS TRYING TO PROTECT YOU AND YOUR STINKING WORMS AND HE GOT SHOT FOR HIS TROUBLES--
HILDY, COME ON-- COME ON.
LET'S LOAD HIM UP AND GET MOVING.
WAIT A MINUTE-- PLEASE--

MOTHER OF GOD--
WHAT NOW?
OH, ERIK... ERIK...
ARE YOU LINDLY?
LADY DEIRDRE HAS ASKED THAT YOU ACCOMPANY US BACK TO THE ISLE OF WINDS.
UH-HUH. AND IF I DON'T?
I...I BEG YOUR PARDON?
NEVER MIND. LET'S GO.
"THESE ARE THE MOMENTS THAT GIVE A BUSINESSMAN PAUSE."
"WE HAD THE MIGHT, WE HAD THE MANPOWER--AND YET, THROUGH FORCES WE COULD NOT CONTROL--FORCES NO ONE COULD CONCEIVABLY CONTROL--WE DID NOT REACH OUR OBJECTIVE."
"FOR A FLEETING MOMENT, I FELT A TWINGE--WHAT AN ATHEIST MUST FEEL IN THE LATE HOURS WHEN HE WONDERS IF THERE REALLY IS A GOD."

BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT WE WOULD NOT BE WHERE WE ARE IF WE TREATED OUR PLANET'S RESOURCES AS WE WOULD *CHINA DOLLS*--MEANT TO BE ADMIRED AND NEVER TOUCHED.
HOWEVER, FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, WE WILL--*REDIRECT* OUR EFFORTS...

"AND, IN THE MEANTIME, WE SHALL TRY TO FIND A FORMAL EXPLANATION FOR LADY DEIRDRE'S...*PROVIDENCE*."
WE HAVE LONG BELIEVED THAT *PLANET* WAS ONE WITH OUR BELIEFS. TODAY WE *PROVED* IT.

TO HAVE PLANET'S FORCES WORKING IN *OUR* BEHALF TELLS US THAT WE ARE WORKING IN *IT'S* BEHALF.
BUT WITH THIS BATTLE, WE WERE ARMED WITH *MORE* THAN OUR BELIEFS.

"WE WERE ARMED WITH OUR FIRST MINDWORM TRAINER."
"WITH THE MOST BASIC OF TOOLS--TOOLS EACH OF YOU HAVE WITHIN YOURSELVES--SHE HAS TAKEN THIS UNKNOWN QUANTITY AND TAMED IT."
THAT IS WHY EACH OF YOU ARE HERE. YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO PARTAKE IN THE GREATEST GLORY OF THEM ALL...

BY LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE--AND EVENTUALLY COMMAND--THESE CREATURES...
YOU WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEND OUR HOME AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD WOUND AND DESTROY IT.
WE HAVE THE POWER TO TURN THIS STRIFE-TORN LAND INTO A UTOPIA--WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT OR CONSTRUCTING A WEAPON.
YEARS AGO, I TOOK A VOW THAT I WOULD NOT SEE US MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES THAT WE MADE ON EARTH. BUT I ALSO KNEW THAT GOOD INTENTIONS WERE NOT ENOUGH.
"THE PATH WE TAKE IS PAVED WITH SACRIFICE."
BEEP BEEP BEEP
BEEEEE

"BUT WHEN YOU BELIEVE--TRULY BELIEVE--IN YOUR CAUSE..."
"NO SACRIFICE IS TOO GREAT."